

FRANKLIN W. DIXON

Hearing that the Hardy Boy books were ghostwritten by a factory of hacks, that was as bad as finding out there was no Santa Claus. Well, maybe not that bad. But close. I'd see the byline on the books, Franklin W. Dixon, and imagine this handsome, urbane man in a velvet smoking jacket. He was gray around the temples. There were trophies of fabulous animals over the fireplace. His years-younger wife would bring him a pitcher of martinis every night at 6 p.m., and he'd make a point of saying something charming and encouraging to her, sensitive to her need for recognition even as his own career soared into the stratosphere. Then the news that the original Franklin W. Dixon never existed, or, if he did, gave up the actual writing of the books soon after their popularity warranted mass production! I wonder what he'd think of the new, updated series where Frank and Joe jump on their jet-skis to pursue crack dealers, and the formerly obese Chet is finally a real participant, having successfully completed Weight Watchers.

THE GHOST OF GUY LOMBARDO

As the red ball drops down on Times Square, the crowd begins to roar in rowdy anticipation. What will the new year bring? For now, only good things. Chronology deserves a clean slate. There's plenty of tooting and kissing, everybody sharing champagne with the cops. The giddy celebrants barely notice the icy wind blowing through their bones, as the ghost of Guy Lombardo makes his way to the Waldorf. It's downright invigorating! The mob psychology of hope seems to have cramped the style of those who would normally be out here stabbing and raping. On any other night, the thousands assembled here would be afraid to walk through this area alone.